

NEWTON FALLS

The Alpha Omega Chapter, Alpha Delta State, of the Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, an honorary women educators' group, in cooperation with the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation, presents a brief history of Newton Falls and its schools.

The written history of the Newton Falls area began, when, after much of its territory was swallowed up by New York and Pennsylvania, Connecticut looked westward to Ohio. A strip she managed to retain from the New United States extended 150 miles westward from the Pennsylvania border and about 50 miles from Lake Erie. It was called the Connecticut Western Reserve, which was divided into ten counties and Trumbull County, which was divided into twenty-five townships. The land now occupied by Newton Township was purchased for \$12,903.00.

The settlement began at three different points. The earliest one was at Duck Creek in 1802. The next one at the river near the Milton line in 1804, and the last at the present site of Newton Falls in 1806. It was purchased by Judson Canfield. He chose a point of the falls where the current was swift and proposed a settlement there. The falls was a midpoint on the eighty-two mile long Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal which was then popularly known as the cross-cut or Mahoning Canal. It is intersected with the Ohio and Erie Canal at Akron Summit, traveling through Kent, Ravenna, Campbellsport, McClintocksburg, Newton Falls, Warren, Niles, Lowellville, and entered Pennsylvania at Beaver. We are proud to note that one of the many mule drivers on the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal, and also crew member for the boat, Morning Star, was James A. Garfield, who later became the twentieth president of the United States.

The Mahoning River has two bridges concerning which some very interesting facts are told by geologists. Before the Ice Age the river flowed north into Lake Erie. The moving of the ice cap, southward, over Ohio blocked the river's natural outlet. When the ice began retreating northward, the accumulation of rocks and debris was left in the great terminal moraines; consequently the river was forced to turn southward. This reversal explains the large and shallower valley of the two branches, and the narrowing as it moved farther toward its new outlet.

As stated before, the early settlement was called the "Falls". It is interesting to relate that the town took its present name from Eben Newton, an early teacher who lived to be ninety-three. He was never sick a day until the time of his death of which he was ill only a few hours. He was very dedicated, and once rather than miss his classes he swam across the river.

Many of our nation's greatness has been cradled in a log school house. In 1812, Newton Falls built a log school house and laid the foundation of its educational greatness. The first teacher was Miss Cora Draper. At the end of the first year of teaching she became Mrs. Collar. The school board permitted her to teach another year, but soon joined the thinking of other school directors that the hand of Cupid should be stayed, and

no married women could be employed. Mrs. Collar loved nature and forbade her pupils to kill harmless striped snakes. One of her pupils, Barney Allen, instantly dismissed any hired man who killed a snake. After Mrs. Collar the school was "kept" by Jonathan Trescott and Harvey Stowe of Braceville. The pay received by these teachers was ten dollars per month, payable in wheat, rye and corn.

We mention that Ebon Newton was one of the early teachers. He was more accomplished in literature than in navigation. One night he stayed on the east side of the East River and was hurrying to the school in his canoe. The river had swollen and there was a swift current. When he was half way over his paddle broke and he was drifting helplessly toward the rapids a little below. He stood in the canoe, pulling lustily at the hitching rope, and still it would not stop. He shouted vigorously. Soon David Hoffstater heard him and called to him, "Walk to this end of the boat and then turn and run to the other end and you will soon come ashore." It was a success. The rebound from his feet propelled from the canoe in the opposite direction. Later Eben Newton instructed others and they too escaped the dangerous rapids.

A log school house was built in the Lower Town or Earlsville and taught by George P. Hunter. Another building on Broad Street housed a school, taught by Miss Delia Carter. This was called the "Little Black School House."

Dissatisfaction with the public schools began to grow in 1856-1857 when there was an academy and several district schools in town. The more progressive citizens wished to unite the schools and formed what was then called "Union Schools". The "Union Schools" was established but not without opposition. The first school Superintendent was N.A. Barrett who was called by Lincoln to serve his country. Although none of the veterans of the Civil War are still living, a living monument to them still exists. Before they left for the service N.A. Barrett joined other soldiers and helped to plant many of the beautiful shade trees standing near the school and in other parts of the town.

In 1878, the first commencement exercises were held with two graduates, Fannie E. Filley and Sadie Bosworth. At this time Mr. John E. Morris was Superintendent. Following Morris was Charles A. Neidhart, a man blessed with poverty in his youth, but who had determination and a natural ability to rise to prominence in the school and community. He had the honor of being the only local boy to be Superintendent of Schools. At the end of the school year, in June 1885, Mr. Neidhart published a report of examinations based upon the class grades and examination percents for the entire school year. The report showed clearly those who would not be promoted. An average of 75% in all branches was necessary for promotion. He explained that the failure to be promoted was due to non-attendance of the spring term. He gave these students the opportunity to study during the summer months and take an examination in his room any time before September 1. Mr. Neidhart, in addressing a class once said, "I am glad to have the honor of filling every position in the Newton Falls School from the janitor to president of the board and finally to be elected Superintendent of my school."

At the turn of the century the School Superintendent was Professor W.G. Cope. He was a native of Salem, Ohio, and a member of the Quaker sect. The Newton Falls School then offered a three-year course of study which required Latin, algebra, geometry, history, and the study of English literature and composition. Superintendent Cope was the supervisor of all eight grades, as well as full-time teacher. The only special teacher was the music supervisor who taught one period each week in each room. Superintendent Cope often stopped in the grade rooms to check on the progress of the pupils. A favorite trick of his was to carry a newspaper into the room and ask the children to read different paragraphs aloud. On other occasions he would ask a direct question as "How do you change troy to pounds avoirdupois?" He always expected the correct answer. Dismissal was much different under his supervision. He would stand in the lower hall where he could see both stairs and the front entry. While he beat a march rhythm on the floor, these students would keep step and march sedately until they reached the street where they were allowed to break ranks.

Professor Cope's graduates were well drilled. Not only could they say the A B C's but they could also conjugate "Amo, amas, amat". He insisted that all members of the graduating classes must have taken the teachers' examination before Commencement. This is made possible for many of them to teach in nearby district schools the following year. He was truly a recruiting officer for the army that fought illiteracy.

Although no women have served as Superintendent of Newton Falls Schools, many local women have been teachers there. The greatest long distance teacher of the school was Miss Alice Butts. She received her diploma in 1897 and taught forty-three years in the school of her youth. She retired in 1940. The women educators have contributed much to the intellectual greatness of the Newton Falls Schools. It is our hope that the intellectual advancement will equal the advancement in the educational equipment now found at Newton Falls.

The memory of school days at Newton Falls are not easily forgotten. Each year on the third Saturday in June a Classmates Reunion is held. This is well attended by many older graduates and some more recent ones. In 1963 it was decided to honor the class which is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Miss Alice Butts gave a miniature town pump as a trophy and this is passed each year to the class with the greatest percentage present. The reunions are enjoyed by many, and wonderful friendships of years gone-by are renewed. Many times tributes are paid to those who struggled and laid the foundations which have made it possible for Newton Falls to have a school system which ranks high in the state. To these early pioneers we owe a deep gratitude.

This script by Phyllis Lamb and Pauline Bode, narration by Gene Roberts. These programs were prepared by the Delta Kappa Gamma Society in cooperation with the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation to promote a better understanding of the history of the townships of Trumbull County with a focus on early education and the role of the woman educator.